

## Nevada County Transportation Commission

The Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) is the Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Nevada County. NCTC coordinates state and federal transportation programs for Nevada County, the City of Grass Valley, Nevada City, and the Town of Truckee.

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The Nevada County Transportation Commission Newsletter is published quarterly. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please write or call the Nevada County Transportation Commission office.

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### Upcoming NCTC Meeting

The next meeting of the Nevada County Transportation Commission is scheduled on:

**Wednesday, May 18, 2005 at 9:30 a.m., Truckee Town Council Chambers, 10183 Truckee Airport Rd., Truckee, CA.**

# Nevada County Transportation Commission Newsletter

Issue 24

**"Creating a better future by building upon successes of the past"**

May 2005



## The Importance of Our Regional Transportation Plan

*The Nevada County Transportation Commission* (NCTC) is currently preparing our 2005 update to the Nevada County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). This planning document identifies the transportation needs over the next twenty years for eastern and western Nevada County. The overall goal of the RTP is to propose, provide, and maintain a transportation system that enhances safety, the efficient movement of all people, goods, and services, and safeguards the environment.

The RTP is a guideline for project and funding decisions and provides valuable information to city and county planners who review traffic reports for proposed developments and how those projects impact our transportation system. NCTC reviews, updates, and adopts the RTP every four years. In order for certain transportation projects to be eligible for funding, they must be included in the RTP.



*Signal and widening proposed on SR 49 in the vicinity of La Barr Meadows Road*

The Plan is focused on addressing the current and future needs of all modes of transportation in Nevada County, including regional roadway improvements, state highways, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, movement of goods, aeronautics, rail, intelligent transportation systems, and air quality (see

page 2 for details). The projects included in the RTP support local land use and population projections in the General Plans of the County and the cities.



*Mousehole on SR 89 in Truckee needs widening*

NCTC anticipates the completion of the draft RTP update by June 2005. At that time there will be an opportunity for the city and county jurisdictions, as well as the public, to review and comment on the Plan. Then NCTC staff will incorporate the comments and changes into the final report and it will be brought before the Commission for adoption. The last RTP update was adopted in December 2001.

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Inside this Issue:

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### Reno Rail Extension

Wouldn't it be great to get on a train at the Auburn or Colfax station and ride to Lake Tahoe or Reno for the day? That's the goal of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) – to get people out of their cars and onto a train, over the Sierras and into Nevada.



*Proposed Sugar Bowl Train Station*

In September 2002, the CCJPA with Placer Co. Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) and NCTC decided to explore extending rail service to Reno. At the same time, Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and Northern California rail providers were at work identifying potential track improvements required to plan future freight and passenger rail operations.

During the course of this effort, UPRR put a hold on future plans so they could respond to a dramatic increase in current rail freight traffic and their need to address rail capacity constraints and staffing issues. UPRR recently indicated that they could not entertain further discussion on the rail extension for at least the next two or three years.

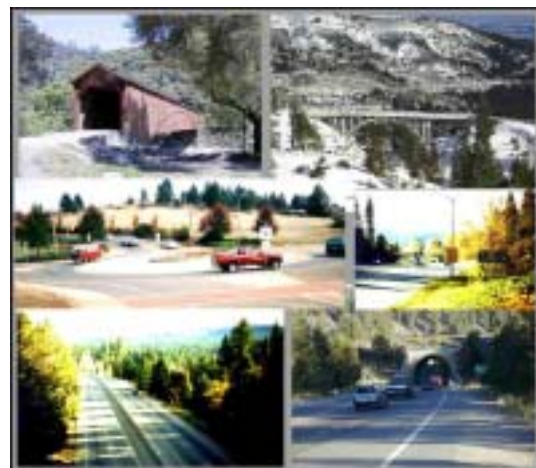


*Truckee Train Station*

The Reno Rail Extension Working Group is looking forward to future opportunity to plan and implement the rail service extension we had all hoped would become feasible in the near future.

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101 Providence Mine Road, Suite 102  
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# What is the Regional Transportation Plan?

**The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)** contains three main components: a *Policy Element*, *Action Element*, and *Financial Element*.

The *Policy Element* identifies the transportation goals, policies and objectives to meet the needs of the region, is consistent with the regional plans, and reflects consideration of environmental, air quality, social, and economic goals.

The *Action Element* of the RTP discusses all of the components of the regional transportation system and identifies actions required to meet the transportation needs of the region.

The *Financial Element* summarizes the financial assumptions and forecasts of transportation costs and the revenues necessary to implement the Action Element.

**Highway Projects and Funding** – NCTC is tasked with planning and implementing transportation improvements with fewer funds, in a challenging local environment of expansion. In Nevada County several key state highway projects could be delayed further if the gasoline sales tax revenues continue to be diverted. The purpose and need of several projects, such as the Dorsey Drive Interchange, State Route (SR) 49 Widening Combie/Wolf Road to Grass Valley, and the SR 89 Widening at the Union Pacific Railroad Grade Separation in Truckee, are described in the Action Element.

**Dorsey Drive Interchange** has \$16.8 million programmed in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), but only \$1.2 million has been allocated. To keep the project on schedule, an additional allocation of \$8.9 million will be needed before July 2006.

**State Route 49 Widening from Combie Road to Grass Valley** has \$18.1 million programmed in the STIP and of that amount, \$3.5 million has been allocated. In order to keep the project on schedule, an additional allocation of \$8.9 million will be needed before January 2007 (see graphic display below for proposed segment of project).

**State Route 89 Widening at the Union Pacific Railroad Grade Separation (“Mousehole”)** has \$498,000 programmed in the STIP for project development, but none of the funds have been allocated to date.

**Public Transit and Funding** – The Transit Services Commission (TSC) recently approved fare increases, route modifications, and the reduction of transit/paratransit service levels. These policy decisions have resulted in a sustainable level of transit service in western Nevada County, but rising fuel costs and the need to replace aging transit vehicles are definitely a concern. The Regional Transportation Plan will forecast the revenues available for transit operations over the Plan period.

**Air Quality Processes and Requirements** – On June 15<sup>th</sup> 2004, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated western Nevada County as a "non-attainment" area under the Federal 8-hour ozone national air quality standard. Conformity is required to be eligible for federally designated transportation funding.


Designation as a non-attainment area requires the preparation of a "Transportation Conformity Finding" and development of a State Implementation Plan (SIP) to be submitted no later than three years after the date of designation, as shown by the proposed dates below:

June 15, 2004: Designation by EPA for non-attainment under the new Federal 8-Hour Ozone Standard.

June 15, 2005: Interagency Consultation Process in place and a Transportation Conformity Analysis underway.

June 15, 2007: State Implementation Plan must be approved by EPA.

The "Conformity" finding must show that all regionally significant federal and non-federal transportation projects do not create new violations of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), increase the severity of NAAQS violations, or delay timely attainment.

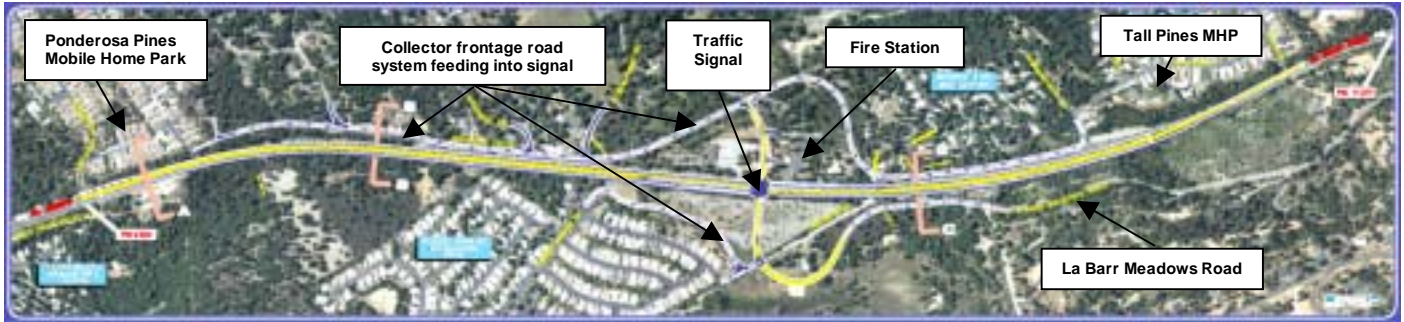
The SIP is an air quality plan developed by the California Air Resources Board, in cooperation with local air districts, to attain and maintain Federal Clean Air Act Standards. The SIP for western Nevada County will identify all sources of emissions of pollutants that exceed federal standards in the non-attainment area and detail the strategies the area will utilize to meet the NAAQS. Once we meet the air quality standards and re-designation requirements in the Clean Air Act, the EPA will designate Nevada County as a “maintenance area”. 

**Caltrans SR 49 Widening Project Workshops** – Two public workshops were held by Caltrans staff to present plans for the five-lane widening of SR 49 in the vicinity of the La Barr Meadows Road intersection, between Ponderosa Pines and Tall Pines Mobile Home Parks. On April 19<sup>th</sup> an open house was held in south Nevada County and had 25 attendees. The following week, on April 26<sup>th</sup>, an open house was held at the proposed project site and 80 attended. Caltrans staff from Traffic Forecasting, Traffic Operations, Public Affairs, Environmental, Right-of-Way, Design, and Project Management were there to explain the project and to answer questions. On display at the open houses was a diagram of the proposed signal location and collector frontage road system (see below). Other displays included a computerized traffic simulation of the area, a twelve-minute PowerPoint presentation explaining the right-of-way process, and poster boards to explain the environmental studies to be done.

Most feedback from those in attendance was very positive, even from those affected by the path of construction. It appeared that citizens could see the value of the project and the added safety it will provide. Some attendees voiced concerns before viewing the proposed project concept, but later agreed that it is the best way to handle traffic entering onto SR 49 from private driveways and roadways. Many stated they wish construction could start immediately.

Tom Brannon, Project Manager for Caltrans District 3, stated the project is currently in the environmental study phase. Next will be the Planning, Specifications, and Estimates (PS&E) or “design” phase of the project. Near the conclusion of the PS&E phase, right-of-way impacts will be identified and the purchase of properties will commence. Once the design and right-of-way phases are complete, the project will be constructed. The proposed construction start date is spring 2009.

The five-lane widening project for the remaining two-lane portions of SR 49 from Combie Road to Grass Valley will be constructed in segments, as funding is available. 



Proposed signaled intersection for SR 49 widening project between Ponderosa Pines and just north of La Barr Meadows Road

# “The Bridges of Nevada County” – Part 4

As “*The Bridges of Nevada County*” series continues, we feature the **Highway 49 Bridge**, located along State Route 49 approximately seven miles outside of Nevada City on your way to Downieville. The bridge arches over the South Fork of the Yuba River and is a favorite year-around spot for locals and tourists to swim, hike, picnic, or just relax and enjoy the beauty and serenity of the river.



Highway 49 Bridge on a spring day with waters rushing and people enjoying the view.

Purdon’s Crossing about five miles upstream, or at the Jones Bar Bridge, one mile downstream, which was dismantled in 1918. In 1993 Caltrans built a replacement bridge downstream (photo to right). The old bridge was closed to vehicles and has since been used for foot traffic.

The Highway 49 Bridge is part of the South Yuba River State Park, which extends from Englebright Reservoir, below Bridgeport, into the Tahoe National Forest. Along this 20 mile stretch of the river you can experience a variety of attractions that include: some history of the Gold Rush era at Bridgeport, 10 miles of hiking trails adorned with brilliantly colored spring flowers, the thrill of watching experienced kayakers in the spring “shooting the rapids” as they careen through the river canyon, granite outcroppings to climb over or




Old bridge in the foreground with the 1993 replacement bridge shown downstream.



South Fork of the Yuba River at Highway 49 Bridge

The evolution of the automobile in the early 1900’s created a need for more bridges to handle the increase in traffic. The concrete arch bridge design replaced the boxy metal truss designs from the early part of the century and the design was first conceived and constructed in California (see Nov. 2003 NCTC newsletter highlighting the Donner Summit Rainbow Bridge). In October 1921 the State started construction of the rainbow-arch concrete bridge pictured on the left. It was completed in early 1922. Prior to it’s construction, traffic to North San Juan or Downieville crossed the river at

sunbathe on, majestic pines and fir trees adorning the hillsides, fishing in those dark pools for the elusive trout or occasional salmon, sitting quietly to watch the wildlife, swimming and cooling down on a hot summer day, or trying your luck at gold panning along the banks of the river. Whatever your fancy – you can fill your day with memories to last a lifetime. 

Some information in this article was taken from a CA State Parks brochure. Two photos are from Cool Travelers journal: <http://www.travelblog.org/Photos/22110.tml>.

California Newt seen on the bridge

